What is Claimed:

1. A method for the secure electronic distribution of software media files using an electronic mail application as a delivery mechanism, comprising the acts of:

    sending the software media files to a recipient computer by appending the media files as an attachment to an electronic mail message;

    opening the electronic mail message in the mail folder of the recipient;

    installing the attached media files on a storage component of the recipient computer; and

    marking the media files as used and saved to disable a subsequent installation.

2. The method for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 1 further comprising the act of determining if the software media files have been installed previously.

3. The method for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 2 further comprising providing a message to the recipient that the software media files can only be installed one time if the software media files have been previously installed.

4. The method for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 1 further comprising the act of determining if the mail database is on a mail server for the recipient.

5. The method for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 1 further comprising the act of determining if the saving of the software media files is successful.

6. The method for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 5 further comprising providing a message to the recipient that the installation has not been successfully completed.

7. The method for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 5 further comprising the encryption of a serial number of the storage component into a system registry of the recipient's computer.

8. A method for enabling an application distributed as secure electronic software media files attached to an electronic mail message, comprising the acts of:

    invoking the application from a storage component on a recipient computer;

    decrypting a serial number of the storage component that has been encrypted and saved in the system registry of the recipient computer;

    comparing the decrypted serial number to a serial number for the storage component of the recipient computer;

    enabling execution of a plurality of instructions contained in the application if the decrypted serial number matches the storage component serial number.

9. The method for enabling an application distributed as secure electronic software media files of claim 8 further comprising the act of providing a message to the recipient that

reinstallation of the software media files is required if the decrypted serial number does not match the storage component serial number.

10. The method for enabling an application distributed as secure electronic software media files of claim 8 further comprising the act of terminating the application if the decrypted serial number does not match the storage component serial number.

11. A computer readable medium containing a computer program product for the secure electronic distribution of software media files using an electronic mail application as a delivery mechanism, the computer program product comprising:

program instructions that receive the software media files on a recipient computer wherein the media files are appended as an attachment to an electronic mail message;

program instructions that open the electronic mail message in the mail folder of the recipient;

program instructions that install the attached media files on a storage component of the recipient computer; and

program instructions that mark the media files as used and saved to disable a subsequent installation.

12.   The computer program product for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 11 further comprising the program instructions that determine if the software media files have been installed previously.

13.   The computer program product for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 12 further comprising program instructions that provide a message to the recipient that the software media files can only be installed one time if the software media files have been previously installed.

14.   The computer program product for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 11 further comprising program instructions that determine if the mail database is on a mail server for the recipient.

15.   The computer program product for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 11 further comprising program instructions that determine if the saving of the software media files is successful.

16.   The computer program product for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 15 further comprising program instructions that provide a message to the recipient that the installation has not been successfully completed.

17.   The computer program product for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 15 further comprising program instructions that encrypt the serial number of the storage component into a system registry of the recipient's computer.

18.   A computer readable medium containing a computer program product for enabling an application that is distributed as secure electronic software media files attached to an electronic mail message, the computer program product comprising:

program instructions that invoke the application from a storage component on a recipient computer;

program instructions that decrypt a serial number of the storage component that has been encrypted and saved in the system registry of the recipient computer;

program instructions that compare the decrypted serial number to a serial number for the storage component of the recipient computer;

program instructions that enable execution of a plurality of instructions contained in the application if the decrypted serial number matches the storage component serial number.

19.   The computer program product for enabling an application distributed as secure electronic software media files of claim 18 further comprising program instructions that provide a message to the recipient that reinstallation of the software media files is required if the decrypted serial number does not match the storage component serial number.

20. The computer program product for enabling an application distributed as secure electronic software media files of claim 18 further comprising program instructions that terminate the application if the decrypted serial number does not match the storage component serial number.

21. A system for the secure electronic distribution of software media files over a communications network, comprising:

  a sending component at a first network location that transmits software media files attached to an electronic mail message to a plurality of other network locations;

  a mail server at a second network location including a component that receives and stores software media files attached to electronic mail messages in a mail database; and

  a client device connected to the mail server to access electronic mail messages intended for the client device, the client device including a reader for opening the electronic mail message and a processor for executing program instructions in the attached media files that control installation of the media files on a storage component of the client device and that mark the media files as used and saved to disable a subsequent installation.

22. The system for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 21 wherein the communications network is the Internet.

23. The system for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 21 wherein the communications network is an intranet.

24. The system for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 21 wherein the storage component on the client device is a computer hard drive.

25. The system for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 21 wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files that determine if the media files have been installed previously.

26. The system for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 21 wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files that determine if the mail database is on the mail server to which the client device is attached.

27. The system for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 21 wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files that determine if the media files have been stored successfully to the storage component.

28. The system for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 21 wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files that encrypt a serial number

of the storage component and saves the encrypted serial number in a system registry of the client device.

29. The system for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 28 wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files for:

invoking an application included in the stored media files;

decrypting the serial number that has been saved in the system registry;

comparing the decrypted serial number with the serial number of the storage component; and

enabling execution of a plurality of instructions contained in the application if the decrypted serial number matches the storage component serial number.

30. The system for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 29 wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files that terminate the application if the decrypted serial number does not match the storage component serial number.

31. A client device for the secure electronic distribution of software media files comprising:

a software module for accessing electronic mail messages including attached media files that are received and stored by a mail server;

a storage component for storing media files attached to electronic mail messages that are accessed by the software module; and

a processor for executing program instructions in the media files that control

installation of the media files on the storage component and that mark the

media files as used and saved to disable a subsequent installation.

32.   The client device for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 31

wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files that determine if the

media files have been installed previously.

33.   The client device for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 31

wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files that determine if the

mail database is on the mail server that is accessed by the software module.

34.   The client device for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 31

wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files that determine if the

media files have been stored successfully to the storage component.

35.   The client device for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 31

wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files that encrypt a serial

number of the storage component and saves the encrypted serial number in a system registry

of the client device.

36.   The client device for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 31

wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files for:

invoking an application included in the stored media files;

decrypting the serial number that has been saved in the system registry;

comparing the decrypted serial number with the serial number of the storage

component; and

enabling execution of a plurality of instructions contained in the application if the

decrypted serial number matches the storage component serial number.

37. The client device for the secure electronic distribution of software media files of claim 36

wherein the processor executes program instructions in the media files that terminate the

application if the decrypted serial number does not match the storage component serial

number.

38. A client device for the secure distribution of software media files comprising:

a software module for accessing electronic mail messages including an installation

script that is sent to the client device;

a storage component for storing software media files; and

a processor for executing program instructions in the installation script that control

installation of the media files on a storage component and that marks the

installation script as used to disable a subsequent installation of the software

media files.

39. The client device for the secure distribution of software media files of claim 38 wherein the

processor executes program instructions in the installation script that determine if the

software media files have been installed previously.

40. The client device for the secure distribution of software media files of claim 38 wherein the processor executes program instructions in the installation script that determine if the software media files have been stored successfully to the storage component.

41. The client device for the secure distribution of software media files of claim 38 wherein the processor executes program instructions in the installation script that encrypt a serial number of the storage component and saves the encrypted serial number in a system registry of the client device.

42. The client device for the secure distribution of software media files of claim 38 wherein the processor executes program instructions in the installation script for:

invoking an application included in the software media files;

decrypting the serial number that has been saved in the system registry;

comparing the decrypted serial number with the serial number of the storage component; and

enabling execution of a plurality of instructions contained in the application if the decrypted serial number matches the storage component serial number.

43. The client device for the secure distribution of software media files of claim 42 wherein the processor executes program instructions in the installation script that terminate the application if the decrypted serial number does not match the storage component serial number.

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44.   The client device for the secure distribution of software media files of claim 38 wherein the software media files are distributed on a CD-ROM.

45.   The client device for the secure distribution of software media files of claim 38 wherein the software media files are distributed on a diskette.